

Idsall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123568
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	327940
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Sharples HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1283
Sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Brammer
Headteacher	Mr A Parker
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2005
School address	Coppice Green Lane Shifnal Shropshire TF11 8PD
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held discussions with the chair of governors, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation for management, planning, safeguarding of pupils, teaching and the curriculum.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well all tiers of leadership and management are supporting and driving the raising of standards and achievement by students and staff
- the quality of teaching and impact on learning across the school
- the overall rates of progress being made by all students since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Idsall School is a larger than average comprehensive in the small market town of Shifnal, Shropshire. The school draws most of its students from mainly rural areas from south east Shropshire but includes families based at RAF Cosford and nearby Telford. The majority of students come from areas of relatively low social deprivation. The school remains popular in the area and applications for places are always oversubscribed. Attainment on entry is higher than average. The school is a specialist sports college and holds a number of awards including Sportsmark Gold, Sports Partnership Gold and the Healthy Schools Award.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1283	Above average
Free school meals	4%	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	15.3%	Slightly below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	6%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	0.07%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2.0%	Below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and improving school. Standards attained in national examinations have risen markedly since the previous inspection. Overall, students make good progress during their time at school. A large part of this improvement is due to the improved quality of teaching and learning taking place across the majority of subjects. This was an area for improvement from the previous inspection on which the senior leadership has focused with great effect. The school acknowledges that this is not yet perfect and the inspection identified aspects of teaching for further improvement. The school has made good progress in covering all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. These improvements, along with an established rigorous whole-school monitoring and evaluation system, show that the school has a good capacity to improve. The senior leadership team, governors and staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are united in the vision and aspirations for the school. The recent arrival of the new headteacher has renewed the motivation and enthusiasm among staff and students alike. The provision and performance in the sixth form are good and are important contributors to the life of the school. The great majority of students and parents are positive about the school but there is still additional work to be done in ensuring that parents are well informed, are responded to promptly and contribute fully to the life of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school through:
 - a greater use of differentiation in lesson planning and delivery
 - a greater use of teacher marking and assessment to assist planning and help students know their next steps in making progress.
- Build on existing good relationships with parents to improve further the channels of communication and their contribution to school life by:
 - producing regular newsletters
 - encouraging greater awareness and use of the school website which should include a parents' area
 - expanding and regenerating the parents' association
 - improving response rates to all concerns and queries from parents.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Achievement is good for all groups of students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress, attaining higher standards than might normally be expected. Other groups, such as the higher attaining pupils who have in the past underperformed, are now doing well. In mathematics, for instance, students tackle demanding work with enthusiasm and commitment. Standards of attainment have improved and are well above average. Passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, rose sharply in 2008 and are above those for sports colleges nationally.

Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attendance, punctuality, and high participation rates in extra-curricular and enrichment activities especially in sports and the performing arts. Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Many students participate in the wide range of sporting activities offered, and have an excellent understanding of how these activities improve their health. Involvement in sports strengthens students' awareness of how to lead healthy lives. The students' considerate attitudes make for positive relationships and contribute significantly to the purposeful learning atmosphere.

Students contribute extremely well both to the school, for example as school councillors and prefects, and to the wider community through fundraising and as sports leaders in local schools. The majority of students say they feel safe around school. They are well supported and confident to talk with staff if they have personal concerns and this is especially true of those who are vulnerable. Students showed great empathy and understanding about the dangers of cyber-bullying highlighted during 'Anti-bullying' week. A new arrival to the school's sixth form said, 'the friendly and caring feeling around the school', was what made her choose Idsall over other possible choices. Students' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is good, with particular strengths in social and cultural development. Links with a school in Kenya greatly enhance students' understanding of diversity. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students to develop workplace skills. The personal, social and health education programme is valued by students. Students demonstrate effective teamwork skills which are a feature of many of their activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Teachers' secure subject knowledge, good quality questioning, clear expectations and supportive relationships are major factors in ensuring students make good progress. Teaching assistants support the progress of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to good effect. Most teachers use brisk questioning to challenge and extend students' learning. Clear and challenging targets are used well to help students have a good understanding of what they are aiming to achieve. Marking is mostly helpful and improving but does not always help students understand the next steps to improvement.

Many teachers use the school's tracking system well to have a clear view of which pupils are underachieving and therefore need intervention support to catch up. Where teachers do not make sufficient use of this information to plan lessons to meet the needs of varying ability groups, then students make only satisfactory progress. Most parents value the positive moves to engage them further and inform them of their child's learning through the target and review days.

The good mix of academic and vocational courses contributes well to the students' progress and ensures that their varying needs are met. Vulnerable lower attaining pupils have a good modified curriculum that eases their transition from primary school and helps them secure basic skills. The school commits much energy to students' care and support. Most pupils say they feel safe and know they have an adult to whom they can turn to for help. The school provides successful and extensive care for vulnerable young people in lessons, in the transition class and in the support for learning centre. At the time of the inspection, the school met all safeguarding requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is well led and managed. In his short time at the school, the new headteacher has made a great impact on staff and students. His vision for continual improvement in standards, teaching and learning is one which is shared by senior leaders, governors and middle managers alike. This is a commonly shared ethos which is filtering across all subjects and all levels of management. Systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating whole-school performance and progress are well established and very effective and are embedded into the work of all leaders and managers. There is a well-established and effective subject review process which monitors all subjects over a two-year cycle. This involves good working between senior leaders and subject leaders. Findings from the school's self-evaluation are used effectively to inform whole-school and departmental improvement plans. The staff and governors know their school well. There is a good quality school development plan which identifies well the priorities for moving the school forward. The governing body is very effective as a critical friend and offers rigorous challenge to the school as required. It is supportive of the school and ensures that it offers good value for money. The leadership of the school works well to ensure all students and staff are treated equally and that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. Similarly, there are good strategies in place for developing the school as a focal point in the local community. Students have many opportunities to gain a sense of belonging to the local community but also to give to the local and wider communities. The work with a school in Kenya is particularly commendable.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The good provision in the sixth form ensures that students achieve well, reaching standards across a range of subjects which are above those expected from their Year 11 examination results. Retention rates are excellent. This is mainly due to the excellent care, guidance and support the students receive, both in selecting their courses and in being supported through to examinations. Leadership and

management are good. The work of the head of the sixth form and tutors is complemented well by a sixth form manager who deals with administrative issues, but also plays a key pastoral role. Students are encouraged to develop skills of independent working within a strong framework of assessment, target setting and high expectations. Students respond with excellent behaviour, excellent punctuality and attendance, and work hard. They act as good role models to younger students, and are an integral part of the school. The sixth formers do good work with younger students and in the local community, supervising activities and arranging events.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from the parents/carers of approximately 13% of the students. This is lower than is normally experienced. The vast majority of parents who replied are highly satisfied or satisfied with the overall provision made by the school. Such comments as, 'My child has received really good care and support from the school', and, 'Both my children have attended the school and have done well', capture the common feelings. These comments generally match the overall findings of the inspectors. However, a comparatively small proportion of the parents' responses are critical of the school's response rates to their concerns, the value of the target and review days, and the strict attitude of some staff to students.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Idsall School, Coppice Green Lane, Shropshire, TF11 8PD

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that Idsall is a good school and recognise that you, along with the teachers, parents and other helpers, all help to make it the way it is.

What we liked most about your school

- The good standards you achieve during your time at school and in public examinations.
- The good leadership of the school by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors.
- Your overall behaviour, manners and attitude towards school.
- The majority of the teaching is good and helps you to do your best.
- The good care, guidance and support available for you.
- The good range of curriculum opportunities available to you.
- The interest your parents show in the school and that most of them rightly believe it is a good school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning improves further across the school.
- Build on the good relations with parents to increase their involvement in school and improve communications between school and home.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and that you are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved. We found our two days in the school to be a most welcoming and enjoyable experience.

Best wishes for the future

Brian Sharples
Her Majesty's Inspector

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